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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 002359

SIPDIS

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FROM THE CHARGE FOR A/S JENDAYI FRAZER
AF FOR JOHN C. KELLEY AND STEFANIE AMADEO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/20/2006

TAGS: PREL SMIG EAID AF SP

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR A/S FRAZER MEETING WITH ALVARO IRANZO

REF: MADRID 1966

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Classified By: CDA Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In your September 22 meeting with Spanish MFA Director General for Middle East/Africa Alvaro Iranzo (Asst. Sec'y equivalent), he will highlight the fact that Spain is poised to expand its presence in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The ongoing migration crisis in the Canary Islands has created logistical problems, bad visuals, human rights concerns and a questioning of identity for Spaniards; the majority of them wish the problem would just go away. The Zapatero government has launched Plan Africa, a significant program of targeted assistance to West Africa, Mauritania and Morocco, some of which is not so subtly tied to the signing of repatriation agreements and the institution of other migration controls. To its credit, however, the Government of Spain believes that the best way to stem illegal immigration is to improve living conditions in the countries of origin. Spain, free of much of the colonial baggage that encumbers other European nations, feels that it can be an active partner and an honest broker with Africa. Through an exchange of letters originated by Foreign Minister Moratinos, Spain has requested to engage with the United States on joint efforts in the region. Spain's experience in the region is fairly limited, and they might appreciate the assistance and advice of our more seasoned development operations. We believe this is an opportunity for Spain to contribute to the U.S. global agenda and for us to improve bilateral relations with an important European partner. END SUMMARY.

//ALVARO IRANZO GUTIERREZ//

¶12. (SBU) Iranzo is the Director General for the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa. Apart from the Sub-Saharan Africa, he is Embassy Madrid's lead contact on Lebanon-Syria-Iran, the Western Sahara conflict, and the Broader Middle East/North Africa dialogue. He holds a law degree and entered the Spanish diplomatic corps in 1981. He has served in Gabon, Mozambique and Algeria. He has previously served as Director General for Foreign Policy for Africa and the Middle East and as Deputy Director General for North Africa. From 1997 to 2001 he was Ambassador to Angola, and from 2001 to 2004 he was the Ambassador to Malaysia. He speaks excellent English.

//AFRICA BEGINS AT THE PYRENEES//

¶13. (SBU) Europe has always considered Spain and Portugal to be nations apart, their membership in the European Union

notwithstanding. The Muslim conquest from 800-1400 A.D. and the similarities with North African culture and lifestyle gave rise to the saying that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees."

It has become a truism of late, as roughly one in four migrants to Spain is now from Africa (usually from Morocco but increasingly from West Africa as well). After centuries in which Spain was almost one hundred percent Roman Catholic, the Muslim population has grown significantly in recent years. Migration is the most important issue to Spaniards according to recent polling. Unlike neighboring France, however, the Spanish have been somewhat more successful in integrating and employing migrant populations.

//COLONIAL HISTORY IN AFRICA//

¶4. (SBU) For millennia, residents of the Iberian peninsula have traded with West African countries as far south as Mali and have also fished West African waters. Spain's colonial involvement in Africa was limited to a prolonged and futile military campaign in Morocco, as well as the colonization of the Canary Islands and what is now Equatorial Guinea. Spain, which still maintains high-level interest in Equatorial Guinea, has a large diplomatic and assistance presence in Malabo, commensurate with its hydrocarbon interests in the Gulf of Guinea. Its coverage throughout the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa is thinner. Spain still holds Ceuta and Melilla, enclaves on the North African Coast that have also seen increased migrant activity. Preoccupied with European integration and economic modernization, the terrorist bombings of March 2004 and the recent migrant waves have awakened Spain to their southern neighbors.

//PLAN AFRICA - ASSISTANCE INCREASES//

¶5. (SBU) In an attempt to confront what the GOS has termed its "final frontier" in foreign policy, Spain launched Plan Africa in August 2006. The plan calls for significant

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increases in foreign assistance to West African countries, the opening of several new embassies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and a large increase in diplomatic representation in the region. Spain's 2006 development assistance budget for Africa totals 380 million euros - 230 million in direct assistance and 150 million in development loans and credits. Additionally, Spain is a European leader in debt relief; it has accepted the G-8 Gleneagles agreement and will have canceled approximately 800 million euros in African debt by ¶2008. Spain has also already budgeted significant increases for African assistance for at least the next two years.

¶6. (SBU) Skeptics have called the effort window dressing and an attempt to look tough on immigration. The GOS has stayed on message - they acknowledge that migration is the backdrop of their initiative, but they insist that their initiative is a long-term commitment that will not fix the short-term problem. For help with the immediate-term problem of boats overwhelming the Canary Islands, Spain has sought EU assistance and found that the European Union has been disinclined to treat the issue as a European crisis.

¶7. (U) Spanish assistance targets the full range of development programs - health, education, water, food assistance, democracy building, and human rights. In the Canary Islands, Spain is also opening Casa Africa, a regional center that will focus on Spanish-African relations, economic and business opportunities, and cultural ties.

//MILITARY PRESENCE IN AFRICA//

¶8. (C) While the Zapatero government is providing a peacekeeping contingent for the elections in Congo, it would be hard pressed to come up with further troop contributions for Darfur due to its other commitments in Lebanon, Kosovo and Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Spanish authorities are concerned about Darfur and Spain fully supports the U.S.

position calling for rehiring and a more robust peacekeeping force in the region.

//BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP//

¶9. (C) After the Zapatero government's decision to hastily pull Spanish forces from Iraq, the bilateral relationship soured for a time. However, over the past two years, Spain has made repeated efforts at improving trans-Atlantic relations, most notably with a force contribution in Afghanistan. The U.S. and Spain share excellent cooperation on counter-terrorism, justice, and counter-narcotics, and the U.S. operates two military bases in Spain. We work closely together in Latin America as well, most notably on Cuba, Bolivia, and Venezuela. At their spring meeting, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Moratinos agreed that Africa might represent another area in which both countries could cooperate productively.

//AGENDA//

¶10. (C) Iranzo has suggested the following regions as topics for your meeting: Sudan, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Horn of Africa, cooperation on counter-terrorism and counter-migration. He will also certainly mention Plan Africa and their problems in West Africa, but we have made clear that the most pressing items for the USG are Darfur, the Horn, and Congo. As Spain's experience in the region is fairly limited, they might appreciate the assistance and advice of our more seasoned development operations. We believe this is an opportunity for Spain to contribute to the U.S. global agenda and for us to improve bilateral relations with an important European partner. You may wish to suggest that Spain target some of its assistance packages to complement our own in West Africa and elsewhere - perhaps in the areas of health, food assistance and potable water. More specifically, Equatorial Guinea could be an opportune area for increased joint efforts in democracy building, rule of law, and human rights. The Spanish are well plugged into North Africa with respect to counter-terrorism and is interested in CT cooperation in West Africa as well (Spain recently hosted a West and North African ministerial on counter-terrorism and has called on African nations to ratify relevant terror conventions).

¶11. (SBU) Iranzo will also extend to you an invitation to attend the opening of Spain's "Casa Africa" in Las Palmas, Canary Islands this November (Date TBD) and to address Spain's African Chiefs of Mission Annual Meeting at that time. If the date can be worked out, Embassy Madrid would

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heartily welcome such a visit as an opportunity to follow up.

¶12. (SBU) At UNGA, Iranzo may also meet with A/S Welch on Western Sahara and the Middle East.

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